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Big turnout at Jasper's Earthquake Planning Workshop

Updated: April 29, 2008 09:06 PM EDT

Reporter: [Chad Sewich](#)

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Recent earthquakes have raised the urgency level to be prepared for what emergency planners call "The Big One."

A two-day conference on preparedness began Tuesday in Jasper. There is no warning and they happen in an instant. That makes planning for a catastrophic earthquake a difficult task at best.

"There is frequent activity along those seismic areas, but for the most part they're not large enough to get our attention like they were the other day," Joe Wainscott, Director of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, said.

After the April 18 quake near Mount Carmel, sign-ups for the earthquake workshop in Jasper nearly doubled. Everyone from emergency managers to road crew supervisors said the tremors have given the conference a more urgent tone.

"Our geology in Indiana and the midwest is such that smaller magnitude quakes can cause much more extensive problems throughout the area," Wainscott said.

Sherman Greer, Vanderburgh County EMA Director said, "We're looking at how we can beef up our plans, work together and expect the unexpected."

There's plenty to talk about how to deal with it all.

"Water facilities, sewers, hospitals, E.M.S., mass casualty, shelter, lots of people displaced, what to do with all those people, a lot of coordination," Ken Zuber, Evansville Fire Chief said.

Everyone here knows they can only do so much. Preparation starts at home.

"Everyone should have a plan within their own home," Greer said, "Have a disaster supply kit to take care of yourself for a minimum of three days."

The Earthquake Planning Workshop continues Wednesday.

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Published April 29, 2008 10:36 pm -

10:36 p.m.: Fire investigators explain process

Fire investigation — how it works

- Fire officials enter the home and start to rule out every accidental possibility for the fire.
 - Investigators determine the location of the fire by following burn patterns on the wall, ceiling and floor.
 - Fire officials determine the cause based on what was going on around the fire's point of origin. For example, if burn patterns lead investigators to an electrical socket, they investigate the possibility of an electrical fire.
 - State fire officials take samples, such as carpet or electrical equipment, back to their lab to analyze.
 - Investigators do not set a timetable, because they do not want to rush. They want to be thorough.
- Source: Rick Batza, chief of investigations for the Indiana State Fire Marshal's Office, a part of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security.

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Published April 30, 2008 10:46 pm - ALEXANDRIA — A fatal apartment fire started on a living room couch, and investigators found an open Zippo lighter nearby, city fire officials said.

10:45 p.m.: Fatal fire started on couch

By Jason M. White

ALEXANDRIA — A fatal apartment fire started on a living room couch, and investigators found an open Zippo lighter nearby, city fire officials said.

State and local fire officials Wednesday were continuing their investigation of a fire that killed a mother and her two children and hospitalized her fiancé and their infant daughter. The fire was Sunday morning at 201 N. Sheridan St. Apt. B.

Erin Williams, 27, Brydin Tracy, 2, and Brisyn Tracy, 4, died from injuries suffered in the fire. Williams' fiancé, Barry Tracy, 27, was in serious condition at Wishard Hospital in Indianapolis Wednesday, and their infant daughter was in stable condition at Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis.

The fire's point of origin was the living room couch, and investigators found an open Zippo nearby, Alexandria Fire Department Capt. Jim King said. But they had not determined whether the Zippo started the fire, he said.

Family members had heard rumors that cigarettes were to blame, but this could not be true, said Alexandria resident Jamie Williams, Erin Williams' brother. Erin Williams and Barry Tracy did smoke, but never inside, and never around their kids, Jamie Williams said.

The fire was being investigated as an accident, according to city police. The Indiana State Fire Marshal's office is analyzing carpet samples from the apartment to help determine exactly how the fire started, Alexandria Fire Chief Bruce Waters has said.

What remains unclear is whether a smoke detector in the apartment was functioning. The fire's severe heat melted the device, so investigators could not tell if it was on or working, according to police. Landlord Brad Hayes was not available for comment.

State fire officials did not want to put a timeline on fire investigations, because they did not want to rush the process, said Rick Batza, chief of investigations for the Indiana State Fire Marshal's office, a part of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security.

Investigators narrowed down the fire's origin by following burn patterns along the walls and floor.

The blaze started in the living room and spread to the kitchen, Waters said. Flames lashed out from the living room window in front of the building, but did not spread to the other apartment in the one-story duplex, Waters said.

Bystanders called 911 at 10:20 a.m. and told the dispatcher they heard a baby crying and screaming from within the apartment.

They kicked in the rear door to enter the apartment but could not get inside because of thick smoke and intense heat, according to police reports.

Police arrived at the scene at 10:21 a.m. and tried to get inside through the rear door as well, but the smoke and heat created an impassable barrier, police reports said.

The fire department arrived at 10:22 a.m. and spent about 40 minutes extinguishing the flames.

The family was asleep at the time of the fire, Waters said.

Williams and Elysah Tracy were rescued from the apartment's east bedroom, and Barry Tracey, Bryden Tracey and Brisyn Tracy were in the west bedroom, Waters said.

Funeral services are scheduled for 2 p.m. Tuesday for Williams, Brydin Tracy and Brisyn Tracy. The funeral is at Daleville United Methodist Church.

How to help the fire survivors

A mother and two of her children died after an Alexandria house fire Sunday. Her fiance and 2-week-old daughter survived, but were hospitalized. Her fiance also has an 8-year-old daughter who was spending the night with her grandmother at the time of the fire.

The families of the victims have set up a trust fund:

- ☐ Williams-Tracy Family Trust Fund
- ☐ Independent Federal Credit Union
- ☐ To the attention of the Tracy family
- ☐ Routing number: 274972579
- ☐ Account number: 692152
- ☐ Bank phone number: (765) 649-9271

Survivors' status as of Wednesday

- Barry Tracy, 27: serious condition.
- Elysah Tracy, 2 weeks old: stable condition.

Funeral services

Services are scheduled for 2 p.m. Tuesday for Erin Williams, 27, Brydin Tracy, 2, and Brisyn Tracy, 4, who died from injuries suffered during the fire. The funeral is at Daleville United Methodist Church.

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State Agencies Helping With Vigo County Plant Investigation

The investigation continues into an accident at SG Solutions in Vigo County that killed two contractors. SG Solutions says several agencies are working with the staff of the pet coke gasification plant in the aftermath of the accident. They include the Indiana Department of Homeland Security and the Indiana Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Two workers from an Evansville-based company were killed when an flanged opening on a high pressure vessel with synthetic gas failed.

TERRE HAUTE, IND. – Several agencies are working with the staff of sgSolutions following an accident that resulted in the death of two contract employees.

The accident occurred just before 11:00 am Monday when a flanged opening on a high pressure vessel containing synthetic gas failed. The victims were employed by Evansville-based Sterling Boiler & Mechanical, and had worked at the pet coke gasification plant on a regular basis.

"As a result of this tragic occurrence, we are actively involved in the investigative process," explained sgSolutions plant manager Richard Payonk. "Indiana's Department of Homeland Security and the Indiana Occupational Safety and Health Administration are on-site as we work together with officials from Sterling Boiler to find the root cause of this incident." Payonk added that the investigation has included discussions with the US Chemical Safety Board.

"As we mourn the loss of these two individuals, we are committed to finding ways to prevent future accidents," stated Payonk. "We will further evaluate our safety procedures, and will remain focused on the safety record that has been the backbone of this facility since it opened in 1995." Prior to the April 28th accident, the facility had not experienced any serious injuries.

Wabash Valley Power owns 50 percent of SG Solutions, which operates the gasification plant that transforms petroleum coke into synthetic natural gas.

Wabash Valley Power is a generation and transmission cooperative (G&T) headquartered in Indianapolis. The G&T provides wholesale electricity to 28 electric distribution cooperatives in Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri and Ohio. Collectively, they serve more than 350,000 homes, farms, businesses and industries.

SG Solutions is a national leader in the development of synthetic gas for use in the generation of electricity for homes and businesses. As one of only two Integrated Gasification Combined Cycle (IGCC) facilities in the United States, SG Solutions has received national recognition as a flagship project of the Department of Energy Clean Coal Program.

Source: sgSolutions

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